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FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF IMAJICA

CLIVE BARKER



DREAD

Adapted by
FRED BURKE

Illustrated by
DAN BRERETON

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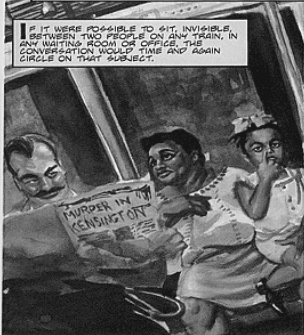
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**THE ARTIST WOULD LIKE TO THANK HIS MODELS—
MICHELE BRERETON, BRETT RECTOR, AND CASEY FOSTER
(THE QUINTESSENTIAL QUAID)—WITHOUT WHOM
THIS BOOK COULD NOT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED.**

THERE IS NO DELIGHT THE EQUAL OF DREAD.

IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO GIT, INVISIBLE, BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE ON ANY TRAIN, IN ANY WAITING ROOM OR OFFICE, THE CONVERSATION WOULD TIME AND AGAIN CIRCLE ON THAT SUBJECT.



CERTAINLY THE DEBATE MIGHT APPEAR TO BE ABOUT SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT...



...THE STATE OF THE NATION, IDLE CHAT ABOUT DEATH ON THE ROADS, THE RISING PRICE OF DENTAL CARE...



BUT STRIP AWAY THE METAPHOR, THE INNUENDO, AND THERE, NESTLING AT THE HEART OF THE DISCOURSE, IS DREAD.

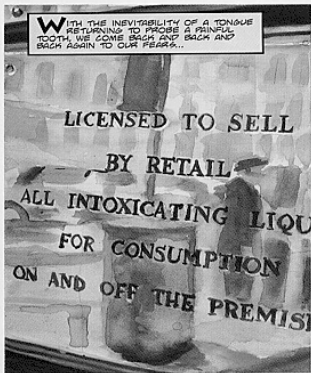




WHILE THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ETERNAL LIFE GO UNDISCUSSED, WE HAPPILY CHEW OVER THE MINUTIAE OF MISERY.



THE SYNDROME RECOGNIZES NO BOUNDARIES: IN BATHHOUSE AND SENIORS ROOM ALIKE, THE SAME RITUAL IS REPEATED.



WITH THE INEVITABILITY OF A TONGUE RETURNING TO PROBE A PAINFUL TOOTH, WE COME BACK AND BACK AND BACK AGAIN TO OUR FEARS...

LICENSED TO SELL

BY RETAIL

ALL INTOXICATING LIQUOR

FOR CONSUMPTION

ON AND OFF THE PREMISES



...SITTING TO TALK THEM OVER WITH THE EAGERNESS OF A HUNGRY MAN BEFORE A FULL AND STEAMING PLATE.

WHILE HE WAS STILL AT UNIVERSITY, AND AFRAID TO SPEAK, STEPHEN GRACE WAS TAUGHT TO SPEAK OF WHY HE WAS AFRAID. IN FACT, NOT SIMPLY TO TALK ABOUT IT, BUT TO ANALYSE AND DISSECT HIS EVERY NERVE-ENDING, LOOKING FOR TINY TERRORS.

IN THIS INVESTIGATION, HE HAD A TEACHER: QUAID.

IT WAS AN AGE OF GURUS; IT WAS THEIR SEASON. IN UNIVERSITIES UP AND DOWN ENGLAND YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WERE LOOKING EAST AND WEST FOR PEOPLE TO FOLLOW LIKE LAMBS.

IT WAS HIS BAD LUCK THAT QUAID WAS THE MESSIAH HE FOUND.







STEVE LOOKED AT THE MAN, PERHAPS FIVE YEARS OLDER THAN STEVE'S TWENTY. THE MIXTURE OF CLOTHES HE WORE WAS CONFUSING.

THE FACE WAS UNREMARKABLE, THE EYES MILKY-BLUE AND SO PALE THAT THE COLOR SEEMED TO SEEP INTO THE WHITES, LEAVING JUST THE PINPRICKS OF HIS IRISSES BEHIND HIS HEAVY GLASSES.

QUAID, STEVE DECIDED, COULD HAVE PASSED FOR A DUTCH DOPE PUSHER.

HE WORE NO BADGES, THEY WERE THE COMMON CURRENCY OF A STUDENT'S OBSESSIONS, AND QUAID LOOKED NAKED WITHOUT SOMETHING TO IMPLY HOW HE TOOK HIS PLEASURES. WAS HE A GAY, FEMINIST, SAVE-THE-WHALE CAMPAIGNER? OR A FASCIST VEGETARIAN? WHAT WAS HE INTO, FOR GOD'S SAKE?



YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN DOING OLD NORSE.

THEY DON'T EVEN SEEM TO MARK THE PAPER ON THAT COURSE.

WHY?

STEVE HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THIS.



THEY JUST THROW THEM ALL UP INTO THE AIR, FACE UP, AN A, FACE DOWN, A B.



O.H. IT WAS A JOKE, QUAID WAS BEING WITTY.

YOU SHOULD BE IN OLD NORSE, WHO NEEDS BISHOP BERKELEY ANYHOW OR PLATO, OR--

OR?

IT'S ALL SHIT.

YES.



I'VE WATCHED YOU, IN THE PHILOSOPHY CLASS, YOU NEVER TAKE NOTES, DO YOU?

NO.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE EITHER SUBLIMELY CONFIDENT OR YOU SIMPLY COULDN'T CARE LESS.

NEITHER, I'M JUST COMPLETELY LOST.



IT'S NOT TRUE PHILOSOPHY THEY TEACH YOU HERE.

OH?

WE GET SPOONFED A BIT OF PLATO, OR A BIT OF BENTHAM--NO REAL ANALYSIS. IT'S GOT ALL THE RIGHT MARKINGS, OF COURSE. IT LOOKS LIKE THE BEAST--EVEN SMELLS A BIT LIKE THE BEAST TO THE UNINITIATED.



I THINK WE SHOULD FEEL MALLED BY OUR SUBJECT. WE SHOULD BE FRIGHTENED TO JUDGE THE IDEAS WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT.

WHY?

BECAUSE IF WE WERE PHILOSOPHERS OF WORTH, WE WOULDN'T BE EXCHANGING ACADEMIC PLEASANTRIES. WE WOULDN'T BE TALKING SEMANTICS, USING LINGUISTIC TRICKERY TO COVER THE REAL CONCERNS.



WHAT WOULD WE BE DOING?

WE SHOULD BE WALKING CLOSE TO THE BEAST, STEVE...DON'T YOU THINK? REACHING OUT TO STROKE IT, PET IT, MILK IT..

WHAT...ER... WHAT IS THE BEAST?

IT'S THE SUBJECT OF ANY WORTHWHILE PHILOSOPHY, STEPHEN. IT'S THE THINGS WE FEAR, BECAUSE WE DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM. IT'S THE DARK BEHIND THE DOOR.



THE CIGARETTES WERE CHEAP-- AGAIN, NOT THE DONE THING. YOU EITHER SMOKED GALLOISES, CAMEL, OR NOTHING AT ALL.

WHAT BEAST?

PHILOSOPHY, TAKE PHILOSOPHY. IT'S A BEAST, STEPHEN--DON'T YOU THINK?

I HADN'T--

IT'S WILD, IT BITES.



YES, IT BITES.

BITES.

STEPHEN NODDED. THE METAPHOR WAS BEYOND HIM.



STEVE THOUGHT OF A POOR THOUGHT OF THE DARK. HE BEGAN TO SEE WHAT QUAD WAS DRIVING AT IN HIS LABYRINTHINE FASHION. PHILOSOPHY WAS A WAY TO TALK ABOUT FEAR.

WE SHOULD DISCUSS WHAT'S INTIMATE TO OUR PSYCHES. IF WE DON'T, WE RISK...

WHAT?

WANT ANOTHER?

STEVE PRAMED THAT THE ANSWER WOULD BE NO.



WHAT DO WE RIGHT?

WELL, I THINK IF WE DON'T GO OUT AND FIND THE BEAST--

--SOONER OR LATER, THE BEAST WILL COME AND FIND US.

THERE IS NO DELIGHT THE EQUAL OF DEAD. AS LONG AS IT'S SOMEONE ELSE'S.

CASUALLY, IN THE FOLLOWING WEEK OR TWO, STEVE MADE SOME ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE CURIOUS MR. QAID.

NOBODY KNEW HIS FIRST NAME.

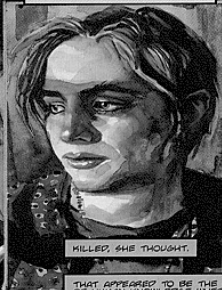


NOBODY WAS CERTAIN OF HIS AGE--



--BUT ONE OF THE SECRETARIES THOUGHT HE WAS OVER THIRTY, WHICH CAME AS A SURPRISE.

HIS PARENTS, CHERYL HAD HEARD HIM SAY, WERE DEAD.



KILLED, SHE THOUGHT.

THAT APPEARED TO BE THE SUM OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE WHERE QAID WAS CONCERNED.

I OWE YOU A DRINK, BRANDY?

THANK YOU.





ONE OF QUAD'S FAVORITE BAITING-VICTIMS WAS ANOTHER PHILOSOPHY AND ENG. LIT. STUDENT, CHERYL FROMM.

AND YOU'RE FULL OF SHIT! SO WHO CARES IF YOU'RE AFRAID OF YOUR OWN SHADOW? I'M NOT. I FEEL FINE.

SHE WOULD RISE TO HIS MORE OUTRAGEOUS REMARKS LIKE FISH TO RAIN. CHERYL WAS IN QUAD'S PHASE, A PATHOLOGICAL OPTIMIST.

WE ALL TASTE DREAD ONCE IN A WHILE.

SHE CERTAINLY LOOKED IT. CHERYL FROMM WAS WET DREAM MATERIAL, BUT TOO BRIGHT FOR ANYONE TO TRY MAKING A MOVE ON HER.

QUAD'S MILKY EYES STUDIED HER FACE INTENTLY, WATCHING FOR HER REACTION, TRYING, STEVE KNEW, TO FIND A FLAW IN HER CONVICTION.

I DON'T.

NO FEARS?
NO NIGHTMARES?

NO WAY. I'VE GOT A GOOD FAMILY. I DON'T HAVE ANY SKELETON IN MY CLOSET. I DON'T EVEN EAT MEAT. SO I DON'T FEEL BAD WHEN I DRIVE PAST A SLAUGHTERHOUSE. I DON'T HAVE ANY SHIT TO PUT ON SHOW. DOES THAT MEAN I'M NOT REAL?

IT MEANS-- IT MEANS YOUR CONFIDENCE WAS SOMETHING BIG TO COVER.

BACK TO NIGHTMARES.

BIG NIGHTMARES.

BE SPECIFIC! DEFINE YOUR TERMS.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT YOU FEAR.

TELL ME WHAT YOU FEAR THEN.



AFTER THAT THE DEBATE STOPPED, NO MORE TALKING ABOUT NIGHTMARES. NO MORE DEBATING THE THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT. STEVE SAW QUAID IRREGULARLY FOR THE NEXT MONTH, AND WHEN HE DID, QUAID WAS INVARIABLY IN THE COMPANY OF CHERYL FROMM.



QUAID WAS POLITE WITH HER, EVEN DEFERENTIAL. HE NO LONGER WORE HIS LEATHER JACKET, BECAUSE SHE HATED THE SMELL OF DEAD ANIMAL MATTER.



THIS SUDDEN CHANGE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP CONFUSED STEPHEN, BUT HE PUT IT DOWN TO HIS PRIMITIVE UNDERSTANDING OF SEXUAL MATTERS. HE WASN'T A VIRGIN, BUT WOMEN WERE STILL A MYSTERY TO HIM, CONTRADICTORY AND PUZZLING.



HE WAS ALSO JEALOUS, THOUGH HE WOULDN'T ENTIRELY ADMIT THAT OF HIMSELF. HE RESENTED THE FACT THAT THE WET DREAM GENIUS WAS TAKING UP SO MUCH OF QUAID'S TIME.

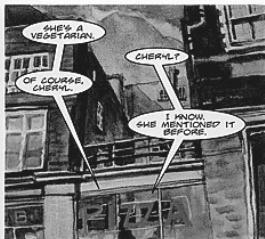
THERE WAS ANOTHER FEELING, A CURIOUS SENSE HE HAD THAT QUAID WAS COURTING CHERYL FOR HIS OWN STRANGE REASONS.

SEX WAS NOT QUAID'S MOTIVE, HE FELT SURE. NOR WAS IT RESPECT FOR CHERYL'S INTELLIGENCE THAT MADE HIM SO ATTENTIVE.

NO, HE WAS CORNERING HER SOMEHOW, THAT WAS STEVE'S INSTINCT.



CHERYL FROMM WAS BEING HOUNDED UP FOR THE HILL.







FOR THE NEXT WEEK HE CUT ALL HIS LECTURES AND MOST OF HIS SEMINARS. NOTES WENT UNCOPIED, BOOKS UNREAD, ESSAYS UNWRITTEN.

ON THE TWO OCCASIONS HE ACTUALLY WENT INTO THE UNIVERSITY BUILDING HE CREST AROUND LIKE A CAUTIOUS MOUSE, PRAYING HE WOULDN'T COLLIDE WITH GUAID.

HE NEEDN'T HAVE FEARED. THE ONE OCCASION HE DID SEE GUAID'S SHOULDER ACROSS THE QUADRANGLE HE WAS INVOLVED IN A SMILING EXCHANGE WITH GHERYL FROMM.

THE JEALOUSY HAD LEFT STEVE ALTOGETHER. HE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN PAID TO BE SO NEAR TO GUAID, SO INTIMATE WITH HIM.



THE TIME SPENT ALONE, AWAY FROM THE BUSTLE OF LECTURES AND OVER FULL CORRIDORS, GAVE STEVE'S MIND TIME TO IDLE HIS THOUGHTS RETURNED, LIKE TONGUE TO TOOTH, LIKE FINGERNAIL TO SCAB, TO HIS FEARS.



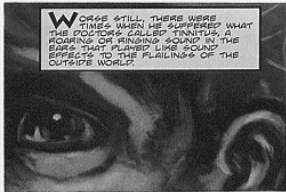
AND SO TO HIS CHILDHOOD.

AT THE AGE OF SIX, STEVE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY A CAR. THE INJURIES WERE NOT PARTICULARLY BAD, BUT A CONCUSSION LEFT HIM PARTIALLY DEAF.



STEVE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY HE WAS SUDDENLY CUT OFF FROM THE WORLD. IT WAS AN INEXPLICABLE TORMENT, AND THE CHILD ASSUMED IT WAS ETERNAL.

ONE MOMENT HIS LIFE HAD BEEN REAL, FULL OF JOY, AND LAUGHTER. THE NEXT HE WAS CUT OFF FROM IT, AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD BECAME AN AQUARIUM, FULL OF Gaping FISH WITH GROTESQUE SMILES.

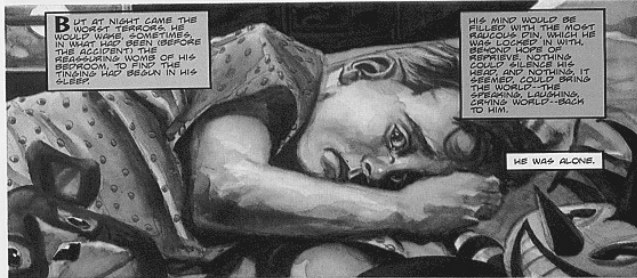


WORSE STILL, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN HE SUFFERED WHAT THE DOCTOR CALLED TINNITUS, A ROARING OR RINGING SOUND IN THE EARS THAT PLAYED LIKE SOUND EFFECTS TO THE FLAILINGS OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.



AT THOSE TIMES HIS STOMACH WOULD CHURN, AND A BAND OF IRON WOULD BE WRAPPED AROUND HIS FOREHEAD, CRASHING HIS THOUGHT INTO FRAGMENTS, DISSOCIATING HEAD FROM HAND, INTENTION FROM PRACTICE.

HE WOULD BE SWEEPED AWAY IN A TIDE OF PANIC, COMPLETELY UNABLE TO MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD WHILE HIS HEAD SANG AND RATTLED.



BUT AT NIGHT CAME THE WORST TERRORS. HE WOULD WAKE, SOMETIMES IN WHAT HAD BEEN (BEFORE THE ACCIDENT) THE REASSURING WOMB OF HIS BEDROOM, TO FIND THE TINGING HAD BEGUN IN HIS SLEEP.

HIS MIND WOULD BE FILLED WITH THE MOST RAUCOUS DIN, WHICH HE WAS LOCKED IN WITH, BEYOND HOPE OF REPRIEVE. NOTHING COULD SILENCE HIS HEAD, AND NOTHING, IT SEEMED, COULD BRING THE WORLD--THE SPEAKING, LAUGHING, CRYING WORLD--BACK TO HIM.

HE WAS ALONE.

THAT WAS THE BEGINNING, MIDDLE, AND END OF THE DREAD. HE WAS ABSOLUTELY ALONE WITH HIS CACOPHONY, LOCKED IN THIS HOUSE, IN THIS ROOM, IN THIS BODY, IN THIS HEAD, A PRISONER OF DEAF, BLIND FLESH.

IT WAS ALMOST UNSURABLE. IN THE NIGHT THE BOY WOULD SOMETIMES CRY OUT, NOT KNOWING HE WAS MAKING ANY SOUND...

...AND THE FISH WHO HAD BEEN HIS PARENTS WOULD TURN ON THE LIGHT AND COME TO TRY AND HELP HIM...

...BENDING OVER HIS BED MAKING FACES, THEIR SOUNDLESS MOUTHS FORMING UGLY SHAPES IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO HELP.

THEIR TOUCHES WOULD CALM HIM AT LAST! WITH TIME HIS MOTHER LEARNED THE TRICK OF SOOTHING AWAY THE PANIC THAT SWEEPED OVER HIM.

A WEEK BEFORE HIS SEVENTH BIRTHDAY, HIS HEARING RETURNED, NOT PERFECTLY, BUT WELL ENOUGH FOR IT TO SEEM LIKE A MIRACLE. THE WORLD SNAPPED BACK INTO FOCUS, AND LIFE BEGAN AFRESH.

BUT THOUGH HIS EARS WOULD RING AT THE SLIGHTEST VOLUME OF SOUND, HE NOW SCARCELY EVER NOTICED HIS SLIGHT DEAFNESS.

HE REMEMBERED, OF COURSE, VERY WELL. HE COULD BRING BACK THE TASTE OF HIS PANIC, THE FEEL OF THE IRON BAND AROUND HIS HEAD, AND THERE WAS A RESIDUE OF FEAR THERE--OF THE DARK, OF BEING ALONE.

IT TOOK SEVERAL MONTHS FOR THE BOY TO TRUST HIS SENSES AGAIN. HE WOULD STILL WAKE IN THE NIGHT, HALF-ANTICIPATING THE HEAD NOISES.

BUT THEN, WASN'T EVERYONE AFRAID TO BE ALONE? TO BE UTTERLY ALONE...



STEVE HAD
ANOTHER
FEAR NOW,
FEAR MORE
DIFFICULT
TO FIN
DOWN.

QUAID.

IN A DRUNKEN
REVELATION SESSION
HE HAD TOLD QUAID
ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD,
ABOUT HIS DEAFNESS,
ABOUT HIS NIGHT
TERRORS.

QUAID KNEW ABOUT HIS
WEAKNESS: THE CLEAR
ROUTE INTO THE HEART
OF STEVE'S DREAD. HE
HAD A WEAPON, A STICK
TO BEAT STEVE WITH,
SHOULD IT EVER COME
TO THAT. MAYBE THAT
WAS WHY STEVE CHOSE
NOT TO SPEAK TO
CHERYL (WARN HER, WAS
THAT WHAT HE WANTED
TO DO?) AND CERTAINLY
THAT WAS WHY HE
AVOIDED QUAID.

THE MAN HAD A
LOOK, IN CERTAIN
MOODS, OF
MALICE. NOTHING
MORE OR LESS.
HE LOOKED LIKE
A MAN WITH
MALICE DEEP
IN HIM.

MAYBE THOSE FOUR
MONTHS OF WATCHING
PEOPLE WITH THE
SOUND TURNED DOWN
HAD SENSITIZED
STEVE TO THE TINY
GLANCES, SNEERS,
AND SMILES THAT
FLIT ACROSS
PEOPLE'S FACES. HE
KNEW QUAID WAS A
LABYRINTH: A MAP OF
ITS COMPLEXITIES
WAS ETCHED ON HIS
FACE IN A THOUSAND
TINY EXPRESSIONS.





THE NEXT PHASE OF STEVE'S INITIATION INTO QUINN'S SECRET WORLD DIDN'T COME FOR ALMOST THREE AND A HALF MONTHS. THE UNIVERSITY BROKE FOR SUMMER RECESS, AND THE STUDENTS WENT THEIR WAYS. STEVE DID NOT RETURN TO CAMPUS UNTIL LATE SEPTEMBER.

THE STUDENTS WERE STILL THIN ON THE GROUND. MOST OF THE COURSES DIDN'T START FOR ANOTHER WEEK, AND THERE WAS A MELANCHOLY AIR ABOUT THE PLACE WITHOUT ITS USUAL MELES OF COMPLAINING, FLIRTING, ARGUING KIDS.



THIS FINAL YEAR, STEVE WAS DETERMINED TO BE AHEAD OF THE RUSH FOR THE FEW COPIES OF SEMINAL WORKS THE LIBRARY POSSESSED.

EARLY TO WORK--I'M IMPRESSED, STEVE.



WHAT WITH?

YOUR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE JOB.

OH.



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

SOMETHING ON BENTHAM.

I'VE GOT PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION. WILL THAT DO?



IT WAS A TRAP. QUINN THAT WAS BEHIND. HE WAS OFFERING A BOOK. HOW COULD THAT SIMPLE GESTURE BE CONSTRUED AS A TRAP?

THANKS. GOOD HOLIDAY?

VERY REWARDING.





"I'VE GOT A HOUSE FOR MYSELF
THESE DAYS. ROUND THE CORNER
FROM THE MATERNITY HOSPITAL,
IN PILGRIM STREET. NUMBER
SIXTY-FOUR. SOME TIME
AFTER NINE?"

"I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE
ANY HABITABLE HOUSES IN
PILGRIM STREET."

"NUMBER SIXTY-FOUR."







IT LOOKS LIKE A CELL. WHAT'S THE BUCKET FOR?

SHE HAD TO PISS. I PROVIDED ALL THE AMENITIES. I DIDN'T INTEND TO REDUCE HER TO AN ANIMAL.

EVEN IN HIS DRUNKEN STATE, STEVE TOOK QUAD'S IMPLICATION. HE DIDN'T INTEND TO REDUCE HER TO AN ANIMAL HOWEVER...



BEEF.

BUT SHE'S A VEG-ETARIAN.

SO SHE IS SLIGHTLY SALTER, WELL-COOKED, GOOD BEEF.



I PUT HER IN THE ROOM ABOUT FIVE IN THE MORNING. SHE WAS SLEEPING. I CARRIED HER OVER THE THRESHOLD MYSELF. VERY ROMANTIC. SHE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL WAS GOING ON--NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF LOOKING FOR A CONCEALED CAMERA.

"YOU LOCKED HER IN THERE?"

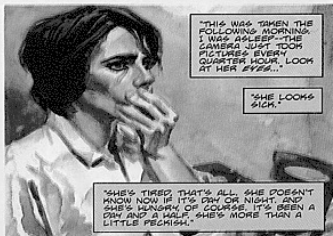
"OF COURSE, AN EXPERIMENT."



"SHE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT?"

"WE'D TALKED ABOUT DREAD-- YOU KNOW ME. SHE KNEW WHAT I WANTED TO DISCOVER. KNEW I WANTED GUINEA PIGS. SHE SOON CAUGHT ON. ONCE SHE REALIZED WHAT I WAS UP TO, SHE CALMED DOWN."

"I THINK SHE BELIEVED SHE COULD OUT-WAIT ME."



"THIS IS WHERE THE
CRACKS BEGIN TO
SHOW, THIS WHERE
THE DEAD BEGINS."



"SHE ALWAYS
ENDED UP
HARRASSING ME,
WHenever SHE'D
HAD A
CONFRONTATION
WITH THE MEAT.
THIS IS COMING
UP ON THREE
DAYS. YOU'RE
LOOKING AT A
HUNGRY WOMAN."

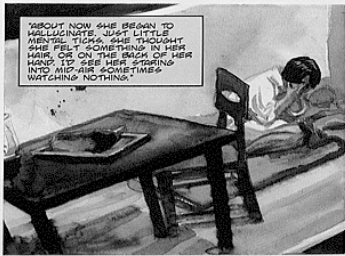


"YOU...YOU'RE
STARVING HER."

"SHE CAN GO TEN DAYS
WITHOUT EATING QUITE
EASILY. FASTS ARE
COMMON IN ANY CIVILIZED
COUNTRY. STEVE, SIXTH
PERCENT OF THE BRITISH
POPULATION IS
CLINICALLY OBSESS AT
ANY ONE TIME. SHE WAS
TOO FAT ANYHOW."



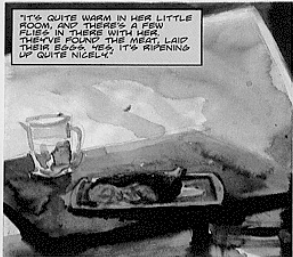
"ABOUT NOW SHE BEGAN TO
HALLUCINATE. JUST LITTLE
MENTAL TICKS. SHE THOUGHT
SHE FELT SOMETHING IN HER
HAIR, OR ON THE BACK OF HER
HAND. I'D SEE HER STARING
INTO MID-AIR SOMETIMES
WATCHING NOTHING."

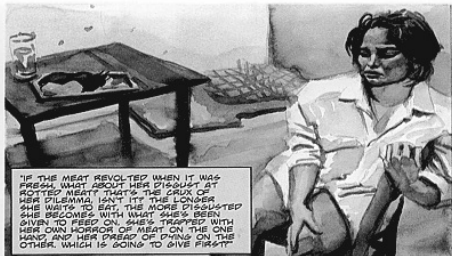


"SHE WASHED HERSELF
REGULARLY. NEVER LET
TWELVE HOURS GO BY
WITHOUT WASHING FROM
HEAD TO TOE."



"IT'S QUITE WARM IN HER LITTLE
ROOM, AND THERE'S A FEW
FLIES IN THERE WITH HER.
THEY'VE FOUND THE MEAT. LAID
THEIR EGGS. YES, IT'S RIPENING
UP QUITE NICELY."





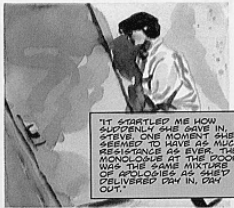
"IF THE MEAT REVOLTED WHEN IT WAS FRESH, WHAT ABOUT HER DISGUST AT ROTTEN MEAT? THAT'S THE CRUX OF HER DILEMMA, ISN'T IT? THE LONGER SHE WAITS TO EAT, THE MORE DISGUSTED SHE BECOMES WITH WHAT SHE'S BEEN GIVEN TO FEED ON. SHE'S TRAPPED WITH HER OWN HORROR OF MEAT ON THE ONE HAND, AND HER DREAD OF DYING ON THE OTHER, WHICH IS GOING TO GIVE FIRST."

STEVE WAS NO LESS TRAPPED NOW. ON THE ONE HAND, THIS JOKE HAD ALREADY GONE TOO FAR, AND QUAD'S EXPERIMENT HAD BECOME AN EXERCISE IN SADISM. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE WANTED TO KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDED. THERE WAS AN UNDENIABLE FASCINATION IN WATCHING THE WOMAN SUFFER.



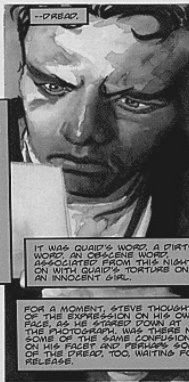
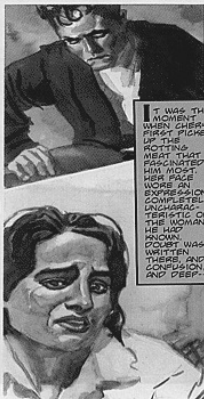
STEVE SEEMED TO TASTE THE ROTTEN FLESH IN THE BACK OF HIS THROAT. HIS MIND FOUND A TENCH TO IMAGINE AND CREATED A GRAVY OF PUTRESCENCE TO RUN OVER HIS TONGUE. HOW COULD SHE DO IT?











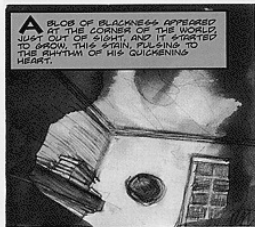


H HE HEARD A SOUND BEHIND HIM,
TOO SOFT TO BE QUAID.

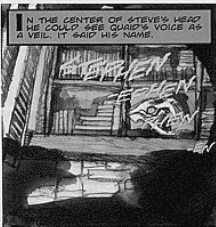
UNLESS HE WAS
CREEPING.



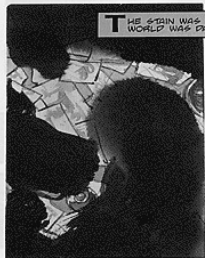
OH, GOD. UNLESS
HE WAS...



A BLOB OF BLACKNESS APPEARED
AT THE CORNER OF THE WORLD,
JUST OUT OF SIGHT, AND IT STARTED
TO GROW. THIS STAIN, PULSING TO
THE RHYTHM OF HIS QUICKENING
HEART.



I N THE CENTER OF STEVE'S HEAD
HE COULD SEE QUAID'S VOICE AS
A VEIL. IT SAID HIS NAME.



T HE STAIN WAS THE WORLD. THE
WORLD WAS DARK, GONE AWAY.



O UT OF SIGHT.
OUT OF MIND.

WHEN HE WOKE UP HE WAS UNAWARE OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS. THERE WAS DARKNESS EVERYWHERE, ON ALL SIDES. HE LAY AWAKE FOR AN HOUR WITH HIS EYES WIDE BEFORE HE REALIZED THEY WERE OPEN.

EXPERIMENTALLY, HE MOVED FIRST HIS ARMS AND HIS LEGS, THEN HIS HEAD. HE WASN'T BOUND AS HE'D EXPECTED, EXCEPT BY HIS ANKLE.

THE FLOOR BENEATH HIM WAS UNCOMFORTABLE, AND WHEN HE INVESTIGATED IT MORE CLOSELY WITH THE PALM OF HIS HAND, HE REALIZED HE WAS LYING ON A HUGE GRILLE OR GRID OF SOME KIND. IT WAS METAL, AND ITS REGULAR SURFACE SPREAD IN EVERY DIRECTION AS FAR AS HIS ARMS WOULD REACH.

WHEN HE POKED HIS ARM DOWN THROUGH THE HOLES IN THIS LATTICE, HE TOUCHED NOTHING. JUST EMPTY AIR, FALLING AWAY BENEATH HIM.



BRILETON

THE FIRST INFRARED PHOTOGRAPHS OF STEVEN'S CONFINEMENT FIGURED HIS EXPLORATION. AS QUAD HAD EXPECTED, THE SUBJECT WAS GRABING QUITE RATIONAL ABOUT HIS SITUATION. NO HYSTERICS. NO CURSES. NO TEARS.



THAT WAS THE CHALLENGE OF THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT. HE KNEW PRECISELY WHAT WAS GOING ON, AND HE WOULD RESPOND LOGICALLY TO HIS FEARS, THAT WOULD SURELY MAKE A MORE DIFFICULT MIND TO BREAK THAN CHERYL'S.

BUT HOW MUCH MORE REWARDING THE RESULTS WOULD BE. WOULD HIS SOUL NOT OPEN UP THEN, FOR QUAD TO SEE AND TOUCH? THERE WAS SO MUCH THERE, IN THE MANS INTERIOR, HE WANTED TO STUDY.



GRADUALLY, STEVE'S EYES BECAME ACCUSTOMED TO THE DARKNESS. HE WAS IMPRISONED IN SOME KIND OF SHAFT--AN AIRSHAFT, PERHAPS, FOR A TUNNEL OR AN UNDERGROUND FACTORY.



STEVE'S MIND MAPPED THE AREA AROUND PILGRIM STREET, TRYING TO PINPOINT THE MOST LIKELY PLACE FOR QUAD TO HAVE TAKEN HIM. HE COULD THINK OF NOWHERE.

NOWHERE.

HE WAS LOST IN A PLACE HE COULDN'T FIX OR RECOGNIZE. THE SHAFT HAD NO CORNERS TO FOCUS HIS EYES ON, AND THE WALLS OFFERED NO CRACK OR HOLE TO HIDE HIS CONSCIOUSNESS IN.



WORSE. HE WAS LYING SPREADBAGLED ON A GRID THAT HUNG OVER THIS SHAFT. HIS EYES COULD MAKE NO IMPRESSION ON THE DARKNESS BENEATH HIM. IT SEEMED THAT THE SHAFT MIGHT BE BOTTOMLESS, AND THERE WAS ONLY THE THIN NETWORK OF THE GRILLE, AND THE FRAGILE CHAIN THAT SHACKLED HIS ANKLE TO IT, BETWEEN HIM AND FALLING.

HE PICTURED HIMSELF POISED UNDER AN EMPTY BLACK SKY, AND OVER AN INFINITE DARKNESS. THE AIR WAS WARM AND STALE. IT DRIED UP THE TEARS THAT HAD SUDDENLY SPRUNG TO HIS EYES, LEAVING THEM BLINNY. WHEN HE BEGAN TO SHOUT FOR HELP, WHICH HE DID AFTER THE TEARS HAD PASSED, THE DARKNESS ATE HIS WORDS EASILY.



HAVING YELLED HIMSELF HOARSE, HE LAY BACK ON THE LATTICE. HE COULDN'T HELP BUT IMAGINE THAT, BEYOND HIS FRAIL BED, THE DARKNESS WENT ON FOREVER.



ASSURED,
NOTHING GOES ON
FOREVER.

AND YET HE'D NEVER KNOW. IF HE FELL IN THE ABSOLUTE BLACKNESS BENEATH HIM, HE'D FALL AND FALL AND FALL AND NOT SEE THE BOTTOM OF THE SHAFT COMING.

THOUGH HE TRIED TO THINK OF BRIGHTER, MORE POSITIVE IMAGES, HIS MIND CONJURED HIS BODY CAPSIZING DOWN THIS HORRIBLE SHAFT, WITH THE BOTTOM A FOOT FROM HIS HURLING BODY AND HIS EYES NOT SEEING IT, HIS BRAIN NOT PREDICTING IT.



UNTIL HE HIT.

WOULD HE SEE LIGHT AS HIS HEAD WAS DASHED OPEN ON IMPACT? WOULD HE UNDERSTAND, IN THE MOMENT THAT HIS BODY BECAME OFFER, WHY HE'D LIVED AND DIED? THEN HE THOUGHT: QUAID WOULDN'T DARE.



WOULDN'T
DARE!

THE DARK WAS A GLUTTON FOR WORDS. AS SOON AS HE'D YELLED INTO IT, IT WAS AS THOUGH HE'D NEVER MADE A SOUND.

AND THEN ANOTHER THOUGHT, A REAL BADDIE. SUPPOSE QUAID HAD FOUND THIS CIRCULAR HELL TO PUT HIM IN BECAUSE IT WOULD NEVER BE FOUND, NEVER BE INVESTIGATED? MAYBE HE WANTED TO TAKE HIS EXPERIMENT TO THE LIMITS.

TO THE LIMITS. DEATH WAS AT THE LIMITS, AND WOULDN'T THAT BE THE ULTIMATE EXPERIMENT FOR QUAID? WATCHING A MAN DIE, WATCHING THE FEAR OF DEATH, THE MOTHERLOVE OF DREAD, APPROACH.



SARTRE HAD WRITTEN THAT NO MAN COULD EVER KNOW HIS OWN DEATH, BUT TO KNOW THE DEATHS OF OTHERS, INTIMATELY-- TO WATCH THE AGROBOTICS THAT THE MIND WOULD SURELY PERFORM TO AVOID THE BITTER TRUTH-- THAT WAS A CLUE TO DEATH'S NATURE, WASN'T IT?

THAT MIGHT, IN SOME SMALL WAY, PREPARE A MAN FOR HIS OWN DEATH. TO LIVE ANOTHER'S DREAD VICARIOUSLY WAS THE GREATEST, CLEVEREST WAY TO TOUCH THE BEAST.

YES, HE THOUGHT. QUAID MIGHT KILL HIS OUT OF HIS OWN TERROR.

STEVE TOOK A SOLE SATISFACTION IN THAT THOUGHT, THAT QUAID, THE IMPARTIAL EXPERIMENTER, THE WOULD-BE EDUCATOR, WAS OBSSESSED WITH TERRORS BECAUSE HIS OWN DREAD RAN DEEPEST.



THAT WAS WHY HE HAD TO WATCH OTHERS DEAL WITH THEIR FEARS. HE NEEDED A SOLUTION, WAY OUT FOR HIMSELF.

THINKING ALL THIS THROUGH TOOK HOURS IN THE DARKNESS. STEVE'S MIND WAS QUICK-SILVER, BUT UNCONTROLLABLE. HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO KEEP ONE TRAIN OF ARGUMENT FOR VERY LONG. HIS THOUGHTS WERE LIKE FISH—SMALL, FAST FISH, WHIRLING OUT OF HIS GRASP AS SOON AS HE TOOK HOLD OF THEM.

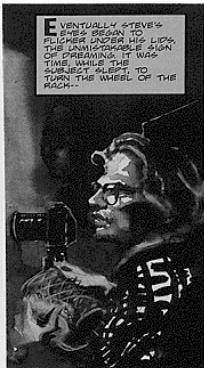


BUT UNDERLYING EVERY TWIST OF THOUGHT WAS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE MUST OUT-PLAY GUAID. THAT WAS CERTAIN. HE MUST BE CALM. PROVE HIMSELF A USELESS SUBJECT FOR GUAID'S ANALYSIS.



OCCASIONALLY, PARADOXICALLY, A SMILE WOULD FLIT ACROSS HIS LIPS. SOMETIMES IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW IF HE WAS SLEEPING OR WAKING, THINKING OR DREAMING.

GUAID
WAITED.



EVENTUALLY STEVE'S EYES BEGAN TO FLICKER UNDER HIS LIDS, THE UNMISTAKABLE SIGN OF DREAMING. IT WAS TIME, WHILE THE SUBJECT SLEPT, TO TURN THE WHEEL OF THE RACK...

STEVE WOKE WITH A BOWL OF WATER ON A PLATE BESIDE HIM, AND A SECOND BOWL FULL OF LUKEWARM, UNSALTED PORRIDGE. BESIDE IT, HE ATE AND DRANK THANKFULLY.



AS HE ATE, TWO THINGS REGISTERED. FIRST, THAT THE NOISE OF HIS EATING SEEMED VERY LOUD IN HIS HEAD; AND SECOND, THAT HE FELT A CONSTRICTION, A TIGHTNESS, AROUND HIS TEMPLES.



IT WAS A WARNERS, AND THE PLUGS IT CLAMPED DEEP INTO HIS EARS PREVENTED ANY SOUND FROM GETTING IN.

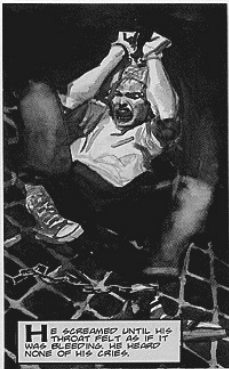


STEVE WAS
DEAF.

ALL HE COULD HEAR WERE THE NOISES
IN HIS HEAD: THE CLICKING OF HIS
TEETH, THE SLURP AND SWALLOW OF
HIS PALATE. THE SOUNDS BOOMED
BETWEEN HIS EARS LIKE GUNS.



HE SCREAMED UNTIL HIS
THROAT FELT AS IF IT
WAS BLEEDING. HE HEARD
NONE OF HIS CRIES.



PANIC BEGAN
IN HIM.

HE LOOKED LIKE
A FRIGHTENED
MONKEY.



ALL THE FAMILIAR,
CHILDHOOD FEELINGS
CAME RUSHING BACK.
HE REMEMBERED THEM
LIKE THE FACES OF
OLD ENEMIES, THE
CHITTERING LIMBS, THE
SWEAT, THE NAUSEA.

THE SHOCK OF THE COLD
WATER DIVERTED HIS
MIND MOMENTARILY FROM
THE PANIC LADDER IT WAS
CLIMBING.



RELAX...
RELAX...RELAX.

IN HIS HEAD, HE COULD HEAR HIS
TONGUE CLICKING. HE COULD HEAR
HIS MUCUS, TOO, MOVING SLUGGISHLY
IN THE PANIC-CONSTRICTED PASSAGES
OF HIS NOSE, BLOCKING AND
UNBLOCKING IN HIS EARS. NOW HE
COULD DETECT THE LOW, SOFT HISS
THAT WAITED UNDER ALL THE OTHER
NOISES. THE SOUND OF HIS MIND--





IT WAS LIKE THE WHITE NOISE BETWEEN STATIONS ON THE RADIO: THE SAME WHITE THAT CAME TO FETCH HIM UNDER ANESTHETIC; THE SAME NOISE THAT WOULD SOUND IN HIS EARS ON THE BORDERS OF SLEEP.



THE PHOTOGRAPHS RECORDED ALL THESE REACTIONS PRECISELY. HIS WAR WITH HYSTERIA, HIS PATHETIC ATTEMPTS TO KEEP THE FEARS FROM RESURGING, HIS TEARS, HIS BLOODY WRISTS.



EVENTUALLY, EXHAUSTION WON OVER PANIC, AS IT HAD SO OFTEN AS A CHILD. HOW MANY TIMES HAD HE FALLEN ASLEEP WITH THE SALT-TASTE OF TEARS IN HIS NOSE AND MOUTH, UNABLE TO FIGHT ANY LONGER.

THE EXERTION HAD HEIGHTENED THE PITCH OF HIS HEADNOISES, NOW, INSTEAD OF A LULLABY, HIS BRAIN WHISTLED AND WHOOPED HIM TO SLEEP.

OBIVION WAS GOOD.



DAMN!

QUAID WAS DISAPPOINTED. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE SPEED OF HIS RESPONSE THAT STEPHEN GRACE WAS GOING TO BREAK VERY SOON INDEED. IN FACT, HE WAS AS GOOD AS BROKEN, ONLY A FEW HOURS INTO THE EXPERIMENT.

AND QUAID HAD BEEN RELYING ON STEPHEN, AFTER MONTHS OF PREPARING THE GROUND. IT SEEMED THAT THIS SUBJECT WAS GOING TO LOSE HIS MIND WITHOUT GIVING UP A SINGLE CLUE.

ONE WORD, ONE MISERABLE WORD WAS ALL QUAID NEEDED, A LITTLE SIGN AS TO THE NATURE OF THE EXPERIENCE, OR BETTER STILL, SOMETHING TO SUGGEST A SOLUTION, A HEALING TOTEM, A PRAYER EVEN. SURELY SOME SAVIOR COMES TO THE LIPS AS THE PERSONALITY IS SWEEP AWAY IN MADNESS. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING.



QUAID WAITED LIKE A GARRION BIRD AT THE SITE OF SOME ATROCITY, COUNTING THE MINUTES LEFT TO THE EXPIRING SOUL, HOPING FOR A MORSEL.



STEVE WOKE FACE DOWN ON THE GRID. THE AIR WAS MUCH COOLER NOW, AND HE LAY STILL, LETTING HIS EYES BECOME ACCUSTOMED AGAIN TO HIS SURROUNDINGS. THE SIMPLE NETWORK OF CRISSCROSSED BARS STRUCK HIM AS PRETTY.

YES, PRETTY.

HE TRACED THE LINES BACK AND FORTH 'TIL HE TIRED OF THE GAME.



NO. WAIT, SHOE! LATTICE! FALL. SLUGGISHLY HIS MIND MADE THE CONNECTION.

OH, POOR SHOE. MAYBE HE COULD SAVE IT IF HE TRIED.



PLEASE... DON'T FALL.

HE DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE HIS NICE SHOE, HIS PRETTY SHOE. IT MUSTN'T FALL. IT MUSTN'T FALL.



HE LET OUT A CRY OF LOSS THAT HE COULDN'T HEAR.



OW, IF ONLY HE COULD LISTEN TO THE SHOE FALLING, COUNT THE SECONDS OF ITS DESCENT. IF HE COULD ONLY HEAR IT THUD HOME AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SHAFT, AT LEAST THEN HE'D KNOW HOW FAR HE HAD TO FALL TO HIS DEATH.



I'LL GO, TOO! I'LL GO, TOO!

I'LL GO!

BENEATH HIM, THE GRID MOVED



WITH SHOCK HE REALIZED HIS LIMBS WERE NO LONGER CHAINED.

HE WOULD FALL.

THE MAN WANTED HIM TO FALL. THE BOY MAN--WHAT WAS HIS NAME? QUACKET QUAIL QUARREL--

MAYBE HE DIDN'T WANT TO FALL AFTER HIS SHOE, AFTER ALL? MAYBE LIFE, A LITTLE MOMENT MORE OF LIFE, WAS WORTH HOLDING ON TO--

--THE DARK BEYOND THE EDGE OF THE GRID WAS SO DEEP AND WHO COULD GUESS WHAT LURKED IN IT?



IN HIS HEAD, THE NOISES OF PAIN MULTIPLIED. THE THUMPING OF HIS BLOODY HEART, THE STUTTER OF HIS MUSCLES, THE DRY RASP OF HIS PILATE. HIS FINGERS, SLICK WITH SWEAT, WERE LOSING THEIR GRIP.

GRAVITY WANTED HIM. IT DEMANDED ITS RIGHT OF HIS BODY'S BULK, DEMANDED THAT HE FALL.

VILE GRAFFITI LEERED UP FROM HIS CHILDHOOD AND UNCURED THEIR CLAWS TO SNATCH AT HIS LEGS.



MAMA.

THAT WAS THE WORD. QUAID HEARD IT PLAINLY, IN ALL ITS BANALITY, AS STEPHEN GRACE WAS DELIVERED INTO DREAD.

BY THE TIME HE HIT BOTTOM, HE WAS PAST JUDGING HOW FAR HE'D FALLEN: HIS MIND HAD SNAPPED. THE ANIMAL SELF SURVIVED TO RELAX HIS BODY, SAVING HIM ALL BUT MINOR INJURY ON IMPACT. THE REST OF HIS LIFE, ALL BUT THE SIMPLEST RESPONSES, WERE SHATTERED, THE PIECES FLUNG INTO THE RECESSES OF HIS MEMORY.



HIS PANTS WERE WET, AND HE KNEW HE'D DIPTIED HIMSELF IN HIS SLEEP, BUT THAT WAS ALL RIGHT. THE FUNNY MOUSE WOULD KISS HIM BETTER.





THE SHOE,
THE GRID--
IT MEANT
NOTHING AT
ALL.



HE LET THE MOUSE
GIVE HIM HIS EGGS
BACK, THOUGH HE DIDN'T
REALLY WANT THEM. IT
WAS FUN WATCHING THE
WORLD WITHOUT SOUND.
IT MADE HIM LAUGH.



HE WAS TIRED, HE
WANTED TO SLEEP, HE
WANTED HIS MAMA, BUT
THE MOUSE DIDN'T SEEM
TO UNDERSTAND, SO HE
KICKED THE TABLE...

MAMA!



MAMA!

...AND RAN INTO
THE NEXT ROOM.



OW!

IT WAS NICE
WATCHING THE
PAPERS FLUTTER
UP AND FLUTTER
DOWN. SOME OF
THEM FELL FACE
DOWN, SOME
FACE UP. SOME
WERE COVERED
WITH WRITING,
SOME WERE
PICTURES.

HORRID
PICTURES,
PICTURES
THAT MADE
HIM FEEL
VERY
STRANGE.



THEY WERE ALL PICTURES OF DEAD PEOPLE, EVERY ONE OF THEM. SOME OF THE PICTURES WERE OF LITTLE CHILDREN, OTHERS WERE OF GROWN-UP CHILDREN. THERE WERE BIG CUTS IN THEIR FACES AND THEIR BODIES.

ALL AROUND THE DEAD PEOPLE WAS BLACK PRINT, NOT IN NEAT PICTURES, BUT SPLASHED ALL AROUND, AND FINGER MARKS, AND HANDPRINTS, AND VERY MESSY.

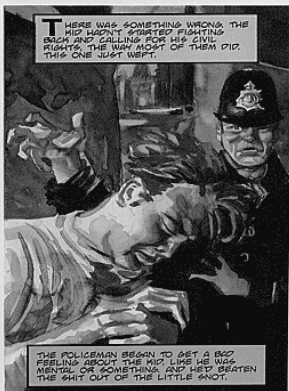
IN THREE OR FOUR OF THE PICTURES, THE THING THAT MADE THE CUTS WAS STILL THERE. HE KNEW THE WORD FOR IT.

AXE.

THIS MAN COLLECTED PICTURES OF DEAD PEOPLE AND AXES, WHICH STEVIE THOUGHT WAS STRANGE.

THAT WAS HIS LAST THOUGHT BEFORE THE TOO-FAMILIAR SCENT OF CHLOROFORM FILLED HIS HEAD AND HE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS.







AT THE NIGHT HOTEL, THEY SEARCHED STEVE'S CLOTHES FOR SOME KIND OF IDENTIFICATION, AND SCOURED HIS BODY FOR FLEAS, HIS HAIR FOR NITS.

HAVING FOUND NOTHING, THE POLICEMAN LEFT, WHICH STEVE WAS RELIEVED ABOUT. HE HADN'T LINED THE MAN.



WELL, HE LOOKS YOUNG.

IT PLACE HIS MENTAL AGE AT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS.

WHAT A MESS.



THEY GAVE HIM A BAR OF SOAP AND SHOWED HIM THE SHOWERS. HE DIDN'T SHAVE, THOUGH. THEY'D LENT HIM A RAZOR. HE'D FORGOTTEN HOW TO DO IT.



THEN THEY GAVE HIM SOME OLD CLOTHES, WHICH HE LIKED. THEY WEREN'T SUCH BAD PEOPLE, EVEN IF THEY DID TALK ABOUT HIM AS THOUGH HE WASN'T THERE.

HE LIKED DRESSING UP. HE FELT REASSURED WITH SEVERAL THICKNESSES OF COTTON AND WOOL WRAPPED AROUND HIM.

THEY LEFT HIM, WITH A TICKET FOR HIS BED IN HIS HAND, TO WAIT FOR THE DORMITORIES TO BE UNLOCKED.

CAN'T I GET ANY SLEEP TODAY? WELL! FUCH!

HE WAS NOT IMPATIENT, LIKE SOME OF THE OTHER MEN. THEY FRIGHTENED HIM. ALL HE WANTED WAS TO SLEEP, TO LIE DOWN AND SLEEP.

THE DORMITORY, WHICH WAS LARGE AND BADLY LIT, STANK OF DISINFECTANT AND OLD PEOPLE.

BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN, AND BLESSED IS THE FRUIT OF THY...

STEVE THOUGHT THAT WAS A GOOD IDEA.

GENTLE JESUS, MEER AND MILD, LOOK UPON THIS LITTLE CHILD, PITY MY...

--PITY MY... SIMPLICITY, SUFFER ME TO COME TO THEE.

THAT MADE HIM FEEL BETTER, AND THE SLEEP, A BALM, WAS DEEP AND DEEP.



STEVE WAKE TO SHOUTING. HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG HE'D BEEN ASLEEP, BUT HIS LIMBS NO LONGER ACHED SO BADLY.



I WILL NOT GO TO THE FINCHLEY ROAD! YOU WILL NOT MAKE ME!



DON'T STRIKE ME! I'M NOT YOUR MAN! I'M NOT!



HIT HIM! KNOCK HIM ONE!

NO...

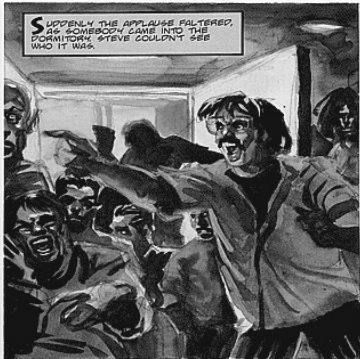


STEVE COULD HEAR THE CRACK, CRACK OF HIS BLOWS, HEEL ON HEAD, THERE WERE CHEERS ACCOMPANYING EACH STRIKE, AND LESSENING CRIES FROM THE OLD MAN.

YOU'VE GOT HIM NOW!



SUDDENLY THE APPLAUSE FALTERED, AS SOMEBODY CAME INTO THE DORMITORY. STEVE COULDN'T SEE WHO IT WAS.



FUCKER!



IT LANDED ON ITS SIDE, AS HIS SHOE HAD LANDED.



IT ROSE IN THE AIR, TURNING AS IT ROSE. THEN PLUMMETED TOWARD THE BASE BOARDS LIKE A SHOT BIRD. STEVE SAW IT CLEARLY, MORE CLEARLY THAN HE'D SEEN ANYTHING IN MANY DAYS.



HIS SHOE, THE ONE KICKED OFF ON THE GRID, IN THE ROOM, IN THE HOUSE, IN PILGRIM STREET.







FUCK
YOUR FIDELITY
BOY!

IT WAS THE LAST TIME OLD MAN CROWLEY WOULD BE LET IN. HE ALWAYS INVITED VIOLENCE. THIS WAS ALL THE MARKS OF A NEAR-RIOT! IT WOULD TAKE HOURS FOR THE WARDERS TO SETTLE THINGS DOWN AGAIN.



N
OBODY
QUESTIONED
STEVE AS HE
WANDERED
AWAY.



A
LITTLE DISTANCE AWAY HE HEARD
RUNNING FEET, SHOUTS, A WHISTLE.



B
UT NOBODY CAME
TO INTERRUPT
STEVE, AS HE MADE
FRIENDS WITH THE
AXE.



FIRST HE SMILED
AT IT.



THE CURVE OF THE BLADE OF
THE AXE SMILED BACK.



THEN HE
TOUCHED IT.

THE AXE SEEMED
TO LIKE BEING
TOUCHED. IT
HADN'T BEEN
USED IN A LONG
TIME. TOO LONG.



IT WANTED TO BE PICKED
UP, AND STROKED, AND
SMILED AT.



STEVE SLID IT
UNDER HIS
JACKET TO KEEP
WARM...



...THEN HEADED OFF TO
FIND HIS OTHER SHOE.



NOOOO!



IT TOOK STEVE A VERY SHORT TIME TO ORIENT HIMSELF. THERE WAS A SPRING IN HIS STEP AS HE BEGAN TO MAKE HIS WAY TO PILGRIM STREET.



HE FELT LIKE A CLOWN, DRESSED IN SO MANY BRIGHT COLORS. IN SUCH FLOPPY TROUSERS HE WAS A COMICAL FELLOW, WASN'T HE?

HEE
HEE

HE MADE HIMSELF LAUGH. HE WAS SO COMICAL.



THE WIND BEGAN TO GET INTO HIM, WHIPPING HIM UP INTO A FRENZY AS IT SCOOTED THROUGH HIS HAIR AND MADE HIS EYEBALLS AS COLD AS TWO LUMPS OF ICE IN HIS SOCKETS.

HE BEGAN TO RUN, SKIP, DANCE, CAVORT THROUGH THE STREETS, WHITE UNDER THE LIGHTS, DARK IN BETWEEN.

NOW YOU SEE ME, NOW YOU DON'T, NOW YOU SEE ME, NOW YOU--

QUAID HADN'T BEEN WOKEN BY A DREAM THIS TIME. THIS TIME HE HAD HEARD A NOISE, DEFINITELY A NOISE.



THE MOON HAD RISEN HIGH ENOUGH TO THROW ITS BEAMS THROUGH THE WINDOW, THROUGH THE DOOR AND ON TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. THERE WAS NO NEED TO PUT ON THE LIGHT. ALL HE NEEDED TO SEE, HE COULD SEE.



THEN THE BOTTOM STAIR CREAKED, A TINY NOISE, AS THOUGH A BREATH HAD LANDED ON IT.

QUAID KNEW DREAM THEN.



ANOTHER CREAK, AS IT CAME UP THE STAIRS TOWARDS HIM, THE RIDICULOUS DREAM. YET, PERHAPS THERE WERE SOME DREAMS SO PREPOSTEROUS THEY COULD ONLY BE TRUE.



NO, QUAID KNEW NO CLOWNS, NO AXE-KILLERS, ONLY FRAGILE MINDS, SO WEAK THEY COULDN'T GIVE HIM A CLUE TO THE NATURE, TO THE ORIGIN, OR TO THE CURE FOR THE PANIC THAT NOW HELD HIM IN THRALL. ALL THEY DID WAS BREAK, CRUMBLE INTO DUST, WHEN FACED WITH THE SLIGHTEST SIGN OF THE DREAM AT THE HEART OF LIFE.

HE KNEW NO CLOWNS, NEVER HAD, NEVER WOULD.



THEN IT APPEARED, THE FACE OF A FOOL. IT HAD BITTEN ITS LIP IN ITS EXCITEMENT, BUT IT WAS A CLOWN, INDISPUTABLY A CLOWN.

ONLY THE AXE
DIDN'T QUITE
MATCH THE SMILE.



THE CLOWN CLIMBED ANOTHER STAIR,
SLIPPING AS HE DID SO. HIS GLITTERING
EYES FIXED ON QUAD, FILLED WITH A SORT
OF BENIGN MALICE. THE AXE ROCKED BACK
AND FORTH IN HIS WHITE HANDS, IN A PETITE
VERSION OF THE KILLING STROKE.



QUAD KNEW
HIM.

IT WAS HIS PUPIL,
HIS GUINER PIG,
TRANSFORMED
INTO THE IMAGE
OF HIS OWN
DREAD.

HIM, OF ALL
MEN. HIM, THE
DEAF BOY.

LAH! LAH!

STEPHEN.

THE NAME MEANT
NOTHING TO STEVE.
ALL HE SAW WAS THE
MOUTH OPENING, THE
MOUTH CLOSING.
PERHAPS A SOUND
CAME OUT, PERHAPS
NOT. IT WAS
IRRELEVANT TO HIM.

LAWWWW!





QUAID'S SCREAM COULD HAVE BEEN HEARD TEN HOUSES AWAY, EXCEPT THAT THOSE HOUSES WERE RUBBLE. THERE WAS NOBODY TO HEAR, NOBODY TO COME AND PRAG THE CLOWN OFF HIM.



WITH EACH STRIKE, THE CLOWN WOULD TUG AT THE AXE TO PULL IT OUT, AND QUAID'S BODY WOULD SEEM LIKE A PUPPET.

FLEEAAA!

QUAID SCREAMED, QUAID BEGGED, QUAID CAJOLED. THE CLOWN DIDN'T HEAR A WORD.

ALL HE HEARD WAS THE NOISE IN HIS HEAD: THE WHISTLES, THE WHOOPS, THE HOWLS, THE HUMS. HE HAD TAKEN REFUGE WHERE NO RATIONAL ARGUMENT, NO THREAT, WOULD EVER FETCH HIM OUT AGAIN. WHERE THE THUMP OF HIS HEART WAS LAW, AND THE WHINE OF HIS BLOOD WAS MUSIC.

HOW HE DANCED, THIS DEAF-BON, DANCED LIKE A LOON TO SEE HIS TORMENTOR DURING LIKE A FISH, THE DEPRIVITY OF HIS INTELLECT SILENCED FOREVER. HOW THIS BLOOD SPURTED! HOW IT GUSHED AND FOUNTAINED!

THE LITTLE CLOWN LAUGHED TO SEE SUCH FUN. THERE WAS A NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT TO BE HAD HERE, HE THOUGHT. THE AXE WAS HIS FRIEND FOREVER, KEEN AND WISE. IT WOULD CUT AND CROSS-CUT, SLICE AND AMPUTATE. YET STILL THEY COULD KEEP THIS MAN ALIVE, IF THEY WERE CUNNING ENOUGH, ALIVE FOR A LONG, LONG WHILE.

STEVE WAS HAPPY AS A LAMB THEY HAD THE REST OF THE NIGHT AHEAD OF THEM, AND ALL THE MUSIC HE COULD POSSIBLY WANT WAS SOUNDING IN HIS HEAD.

AND QUAD KNEW, MEETING THE CLOWN'S VACANT STARE THROUGH AN AIR TURNED BLOOD, THAT THERE WAS WORSE IN THE WORLD THAN DREAD, WORSE THAN DEATH ITSELF.

THERE WAS PAIN WITHOUT HOPE OF HEALING. THERE WAS LIFE THAT REFUSED TO END. LONG AFTER THE MIND HAD BEGGED THE BODY TO CEASE.

AND WORST, THERE WERE DREAMS COME TRUE.

THE END

OTHER BOOKS BY CLIVE BARKER FROM ECLIPSE

TAPPING THE VEIN BOOK 1

TAPPING THE VEIN BOOK 2

TAPPING THE VEIN BOOK 3

TAPPING THE VEIN BOOK 4

TAPPING THE VEIN BOOK 5

THE YATTERING AND JACK

REVELATIONS

SON OF CELLULOID

PANDEMONIUM

CLIVE BARKER ILLUSTRATOR

BOOKS OF BLOOD PORTFOLIO

•

COMING SOON:

RAWHEAD REX

LIFE OF DEATH

AGE OF DESIRE

CLIVE BARKER

Clive Barker was born in 1952 in Liverpool, and now resides in Beverly Hills. Clive Barker's extraordinary stories have captivated millions of readers and filmgoers. With his short stories in the *Books of Blood* and such best-selling novels as *Weaveworld*, *Cabal*, *The Damnation Game*, *The Great and Secret Show*, and *Imajica*; in his spectacular films *Hellraiser*, *Hellbound*, and *Nightbreed*; and through the graphic novel adaptations of his stories and ideas in *Tapping the Vein*, *Son of Celluloid*, *Revelations*,

Hellraiser, and *Nightbreed*, Barker has utilized all aspects of popular culture to create an indelible and unique vision of modern horror and fantasy. Two coffee table books about Barker—*Clive Barker, Illustrator*, which includes character designs for many of his films; and *Pandemonium*, which features a never-before-published play—offer insight into the mind of the acclaimed fantasist. Upcoming Barker stories to be illustrated by modern masters of sequential art include *Age of Desire*, *Life of Death*, *Rawhead Rex*, and *The Great and Secret Show*.



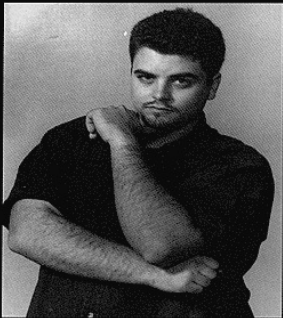


FRED BURKE

Fred Burke is the author of *Clive Barker, Illustrator*, a coffee table art book exploring Barker's paintings and drawings, and the editor of *Tapping the Vein*, the Eclipse graphic album adaptations of Barker's *Books of Blood*. Burke is currently scripting the comic book version of Barker's *The Great And Secret Show* as well as writing and designing *Clive Barker, Illustrator II*. Born in Austin, Texas, in 1965, Burke now lives in northern California, where his pursuits include astrology, caffeine addiction, manga translation, and volunteer work for San Francisco's Stop AIDS Project.

DAN BRERETON

Dan Brereton's first professional comics work, Eclipse's prestige format, fully painted *Black Terror* mini-series, won him the coveted Russ Manning Award for Promising Newcomer in 1990. He went on to paint *The Psycho* for DC, and, since finishing *Dread*, has begun work with Walt Simonson on a prestige *World's Finest* mini-series. A San Francisco Bay Area native and avid collector of toys, Brereton and his family share their home with a pair of man-eating fish, two snakes, Lucifer and Polychrome, and an iguana named Cleo.



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